



★ ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE ★

Deadline: September 25TH

Candidate Event: October 15TH, 5:30PM

Solidarity Lowell 2023 City Council Questionnaire

Name: Vesna Nuon

Office Sought: City Councilor At-Large

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Section 1: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1. The city has more work to do in the area of fair, unbiased policing.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? How would you address this issue?

More anti-bias and cultural sensitivity training, recruiting from our minority communities, and interaction with those communities.

2. The city needs to diversify its hiring practices so that City Hall proportionally represents the ethnic makeup of our city's residents.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What are your proposals to address Lowell city hiring practices?

The City has a report that was done by outside consultants regarding the flaws in our current hiring policy. I recently made a motion that the manager produce a comprehensive hiring policy that reflects the "roles and goals" of future hiring. And not just hiring, but promoting on an equitable basis.

3. Would you support requiring developers in the city to sign community benefit agreements? These might include requirements that their workforce reflect Lowell's diversity, that a certain percentage of their workforce be local hires, and/or that pay be a living wage. (YES/NO)

YES.

4. The city needs to ensure that all marginalized communities are equally protected.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What proposals do you have for ensuring equal protections for all Lowell residents and visitors?

Not sure what "equally protected" means. We have equal rights in this country and this city. That should be respected for all, regardless of race, income, age, or anything else.

5. Systemic racism is a public health crisis in Lowell.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

If so, why and how do you propose to respond to the crisis in Lowell-specific ways? If not, why not?

Continue to partner with our non-profits who provide healthcare for our less fortunate.

6. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all of the diverse communities of Lowell in policy-making, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?

Council meetings are open to all. I have put forth motions regarding more materials being translated into other languages, and we reach out to hosts at LTC who broadcast to various communities to be sure they are informed of what goes on. We have run workshops for minorities to prepare for taking the civil service exam. I will continue to advocate for these policies.

Section II: Housing, Labor, and Development

1. Lowell's code enforcement should do more to protect tenants from evictions and/or penalties for previous evictions.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

If so, why and how do you propose to strengthen tenant rights? If not, why not?

Evictions are under the purview of Housing Court, not code enforcement. I agree that we need to ensure that tenants rights are protected.

2. How would you expand affordable housing in Lowell and ensure development without displacement of established communities?

I have been advocating for ADUs as a small part of the solution. We need to find places to build multiple-family housing, continue to offer incentives to builders who are willing to develop those places. Continue to support the non-profits who are building now.

3. How would you address the needs of the unhoused population of Lowell?

We need a plan. We have had many meetings and summits on the issue but we do not have a plan. And without a plan, no action can be taken. The Governor has put \$250 million in a supplementary budget for addressing the housing shortage and homeless issue. I made a motion to erect a "Demonstration Cabin" to show what can be done to shelter the unhoused during severe winter weather. We will bring this back up once the ADU issue is settled.

4. Do you agree with a Housing First approach? (YES/NO)

YES.

5. Do you agree with the city's unhoused encampment sweeps? (YES/NO)

YES.

6. Would you agree with establishing legal camping areas for those unhoused persons for whom no other accommodations are available? (YES/NO)

YES.

7. How would you ensure there are adequate services for all unhoused persons?

Answers to two previous questions are not easily yes/no. Cleaning up encampments must be done in a humane way, and options need to be provided. A legal camping area is similar to my proposal for cabins. Services would be provided at the location, similar to Shattuck State Hospital cottage/cabin program.

8. Would you support a city wage theft ordinance that would set up structures to protect workers from wage theft violations such as failure to make wage payments; failure to abide by minimum wage, prevailing wage and overtime laws; and independent contractor misclassification? (YES/NO)

YES.

9. How would you fill the empty downtown storefronts?

We need to promote renovating upper floors as housing and office space. Without foot traffic downtown, businesses won't thrive. One of the biggest problems is the need to build elevators within these properties. The problem is not insurmountable, but we need to work with the state and the federal government for funding.

Section III: Environment and Transportation

1. Would you support programs to subsidize retrofitting the old housing stock in Lowell to be more energy efficient, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce energy costs for residents? (YES/NO)

YES.

2. Climate change is causing more days of extreme heat, flooding, damaging storms, and drought; just to name a few of the impacts. Lowell could do more to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

What steps would you recommend that the city take to improve its preparedness?

All repairs and improvements to municipal buildings must have energy efficiency and emission reduction at its center. The City should continue to work with the State on the Mass Save program that increases efficiency in existing housing and we should aim to end fossil fuels in any new construction.

3. In 2018, the Lowell City Council passed a resolution supporting a goal of 100% renewable energy use in Lowell-- including in buildings and transportation-- by 2035. This year, Massachusetts passed a new climate law that requires significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions across our economy by 2030. What steps would you recommend that Lowell take to accomplish these goals?

In addition to the previous answer regarding buildings, we need to invest in electric transportation wherever possible.

4. The hours and reach of the LRTA need to be extended.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree

5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? If so, what would you recommend in order to reach this goal?

We need to educate and advocate for using public transportation. Empty buses can't survive.

5. Lowell should prioritize policies that make it easier to get around the city without depending on cars.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What policy priorities do you support to achieve this goal?

Again, we need to educate the public about how limiting the use of cars whenever possible is necessary to rein in the negative effects of emission of fossil fuels.

Section IV: City Management/Council Relations

1. Do you agree that too much of our City Council meetings are spent on discussing items that could have been delegated to the City Manager or the appropriate department ahead of the meeting?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

2. Do you support the five minute speaking time limit being extended to also cover City Council and School Committee members?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

3. Do you agree that there should be a limit on the number of amendments a Councilor can propose on a given motion or ordinance?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Please share any additional thoughts on how our city meetings are run.

The way our meetings are run changes every two years depending on who is mayor. We should not have to make a motion to fill a pothole--a phone call or email to the manager's office should be sufficient. Things that need a majority to pass should take priority.

Section V: Final Thoughts

1. Communication between the Lowell city government and the people of Lowell needs to be improved.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

If so, what ideas do you have to improve the communication between the Lowell city government and the people of Lowell? If not, why not?

The biggest challenge is language. We need to be sure that all important information goes out in our four major languages. It would be great to summarize all council meetings in the three of those non-English languages.

2. What will you do to maintain contact with your constituents while you are in office?

At least half the city seems to have my cell phone number already. They also know where I live.

3. Do you commit to ensuring that important city communications are accessible in the main languages (English, Spanish, Khmer) of the city's residents, including City Council meetings and minutes, policy and emergency announcements?

See above.

4. What are your top three priorities if elected?

1. Housing/homelessness. 2. Diversity in City hiring. 3. Public Safety. 4. Economic Development (especially downtown). (Sorry, we need to address all four.)